

Oral Testimony to CPR Commission Hearing
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I will speak primarily to two recommendations in the CPR report owing to their significance to CSU and to their potential to benefit the people of California, to increase the efficiency of higher education and to make more effective use of taxpayer dollars.

First, the Commission has it right about the need to improve the transfer of California Community College (CCC) students to public universities. This is especially relevant to CSU and to the state because the Master Plan places so much emphasis on students going to community college for two years and then transferring to a university, more so than any other state. Moreover, CSU is heavily invested in transfer students; annually CSU will award 62,000 baccalaureate degrees and 2/3 will be CCC transfers. CSU admits 55,000 new transfers each year.

All of this means that the transfer process between CCC and CSU must be perfect if state and student dollars are to be used effectively. Unfortunately, transfer, in California is as the Commission states: “disjointed, complex, confusing”, and I would add, almost impossible to fix given past misunderstandings and academic and campus provincialism.

However, after many years of trying, CSU, in cooperation with the CCCs, has put policy into place and begun actions to correct this problem along the lines suggested in the CPR report. Several steps were needed to enable the transfer process to be improved.

First, we defined the magnitude of the problem: namely that the average transfer student earns 157 units, 81 at CCC’s and another 76 at CSU. That is well over 30 units beyond what CSU requires for its average degree program (120-128 units). Reducing this overage by just 20 units translates into over \$100 million that the CCCs and CSU could redirect to provide access to over 25,000 new students each year.

The second step was to change the views of what constitutes an effective transfer process. To this day, many believe that as long as each one of our 31 public universities have separate agreements with each of the 108 CCCs this will lead to effective transfer. However, from the prospective transfer student perspective these separate agreements, many of which are based in different requirements across the universities; lead to students not having taken the right courses and losing credits after transfer. We must establish that an effective transfer system is one in which all universities present the same requirements to students, no matter from which CCC they come and at which university they enroll.

Third, the universities and CCCs need to create a clear, straight path to the baccalaureate degree for transfer students, one that will have students transferring from the CC with 60

lower division units acceptable at all CSU campuses. When transfer students have completed the right freshmen and sophomore coursework, the university is then able to help the student complete the degree in the minimum number of junior and senior courses (normally another 60 units of coursework). Knowing that transfer students will have the right 60 units also enables the CSU campus to guarantee admission and a direct path to the degree.

Two actions are needed to implement fully this effective transfer process. First, public universities must adopt common lower division course requirements for each major program. CSU and its faculty have committed to do this immediately and to ensure that students who transfer with these requirements met will be able to complete the baccalaureate degree in the minimum number of remaining units.

Second, and for maximum benefit to the student and state, CCCs should ensure that students declare majors early and complete the common lower division pattern before transfer. In addition, the creation of a 60 unit associate degree designed only for transfer would result in a tremendous savings of state and student dollars and time. Students need only 60 units to transfer, not the 66 or more units required currently for most associate degrees.

A second recommendation that mutually reinforces CSU initiatives is the development of a state-level accountability system based on clear statewide goals for higher education. We participated actively in the work culminating in SB1331, which would establish a statewide postsecondary accountability structure. Because the Board of Trustees and Chancellor already have a rich campus and aggregate system accountability structure in place, complete with measurable performance indicators and goals for change and improvement, we especially appreciate this bill's concept that the state-level process be related to the accountability process already in place at CSU. We also believe the compact agreement among the Governor and CSU and UC provides a sound vehicle for connecting accountability performance measures and results to the state budget process.

There are two recommendations that cause some concern from CSU's point of view. The suggestion that fee waivers be employed rather than Cal Grants is a problem in that it would make it too easy for the state simply to expect CSU and UC to absorb the waivers within existing budgets. The presence of a separate Cal Grant budget item that must be funded each year and then allocated on the basis of need ensures that financial aid is funded consciously and directly by the state.

Finally, the recommendation to consider approving CCC's to offer baccalaureate degrees so that access is provided in hard-to-serve areas of the state would change in fundamental ways the division of responsibilities set by the Master Plan, which with some exceptions has served California well. Our basis for opposing this idea is that it is CSU's role to make the baccalaureate degree accessible statewide; and, when there are geographical areas in which there is sufficient need and demand for new programs, CSU is committed to join the local community college to offer the final two years of the degree in ways that make it accessible to place-bound students.